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State Budget Agreement Reached

Education remains top priority; no new taxes on Michigan families

Wednesday, July 16, 2003, LANSING – Republican lawmakers and the governor reached an agreement yesterday on a state budget that places heavy emphasis on education, health care, economic and job development and the environment Sen. Patricia Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township, announced.

"We have continued to keep education a top priority in this challenging budget. I am very pleased that we have preserved the Merit Scholarship Award at the \$2,500 level," Birkholz said. "And that Early Childhood Education is eligible for up to \$72 million through a grant program."

Among the provisions hammered out by legislative leaders and the governor include:

- Restoring 17 of the 34 deferred road projects that will increase motorist safety and create a viable state infrastructure for the movement of commerce,
- Approval of the Driver Responsibility and Claim it Correctly Programs,
- Initiate funding for a Governor-Speaker technology partnership that will provide laptop computers to 6th grade students across the state. The partnership is possible with the support of federal funds, and
- Maintain funding for the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

"It is a great relief to know we balanced the budget and we can now look to the future," said Birkholz.